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MOTHER'S LIFE IN MINIATURE

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A POEM

BY

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Mother's Life in Miniature

I

THESE homely lines, though crude yet still sincere,
To thee I dedicate, my Mother dear;
To thee, whose days in peace are gliding by;
To thee, whose merited reward draws nigh.

II

Early upon thee came life's duties and
Responsibilities, cares of the home
Left to thee by a mother fond gone to
Her rest. The schoolroom, too, thy presence knew,
There the young mind to teach and train the heart
To rule. Next followed at an early age
Maternal joys and sorrows, busy round
Of family life.

III

A well built house of logs, decent though small,
Kept trim and tidy by thy hands, its walls
Adorned with pictures cut from magazines
And papers, one large room with alcoves two,
For beds, and clothes-press set between—such was
The early home, on rising ground and woods
About, which sheltered deer and smaller game,
The home o'er which thou didst preside.

IV

Soon smiling fields of grass, and wheat, and corn
Replaced the sturdy beach and oak and elm
That fell beneath thy woodman's axe so keen.
He shared with thee the hardships of those old,
Stern days, he, who was kind but firm as rock
In his integrity.

V

The lean-to later built against the house
More room did give and comfort add; and these
Were needed now, its occupants increased
To four. Hard was the work, but prosperous
Grew the young farmer and his wife as years
Went by.

VI

How clear the picture of that little home
Appears before me now, with thee, my good,
Kind Mother, at thy work; the floor clean mopped,
The polished stove, the beds filled high with corn
Husks or with straw, and all o'erspread with sheets
Snow-white and quilts in many colored squares
And other patterns and designs, all neat,
And valanced round with drapery nice; the chairs
In order ranged and ornaments hand-made,
Placed here and there, while thou pursuedst thy task,
Mending, sewing, knitting, mayhap, or with
Thy needle doing fancy work—artist
Thou wast by nature formed—or fashioning thy
Boys' garments.

VII

The culinary art, so nearly lost
To modern housewife, thou didst have in great
Perfection. Plain and wholesome dishes to
Prepare thou knew'st just how; and richest foods,
These healthful, too. How many were the hours
Thus spent by thee to please the taste and build
The human frame strong and robust.

VIII

Thy love for flowers grew as passed the years.
The morning-glory and the honey-suckle
Climbed round the door, and lightly trellised o'er
The window. Trim kept were the figured beds
And shapes that formed a fragrant avenue,
Sweet scent of rose, of pink, of violet,
And many more, to sight as beautiful
As grateful to the smell. Wild flowers were thy
Delight, and mine likewise.

IX

Few books, but chosen well, were in that home,
The Bible first, most used, its lessons taught
With loving care to thy young charges two.
Not idle were their minds but filled with thoughts
And sayings wise that thou hadst gleaned and gavest
To them, to make them strong for truth and right.

X

No fonder picture can I draw than this,
Recalled in memory oft: Thou sitting with
Thy long and silken hair unbound, while I
Beside thee stood and drew a lazy comb
Slow through those glossy strands, and listened to
Thy wondrous tales; the thrilling deeds performed
By ancestors of thine and their compeers.
And thou hadst had adventures of thine own,
Which thou didst modestly relate and call
But small affairs, to me most interesting.
Then tales of knights, enchanted castles, and rhymes
Galore, poured forth in lively flow unceasing.
Thy ready wit invented many a tale
More marvelous to me by far than all
That books could give, or e'en thy memory, full
Of facts, called forth. Thus hours were spent by thee
In entertaining and instructing my
Young mind: happy to me those hours so spent.

XI

A just and equal judge between us two,
William, my junior, and myself, in our
Disputes and little, jarring discords, thou
Could'st soon compose them all, and harmony
Restore. Thy own good nature mingled large
In us made mutual love the rule and not
The exception.

XII

The neighbors all knew well thy worth, thy deeds
Of kindness, and thy love for them and theirs.
Oft didst thou heal their ills with simple but
Effective remedies; and to the poor
Thou gavest what could be spared and oft-times more.

XIII

In social and religious life in that
Community wherein we lived and were
A part, thy genial temper and thy soft
Command made thee a leader and a guide
Welcomed by all. Oft didst thou entertain
In our small comfortable home the ladies
Of the neighborhood at teas whereat were feasts
Of things delicious to the taste, where mirth
Flowed free, and harmless, lightsome talk buzzed round
The busy room; but graver themes engaged
Also the attention of the fair on those
Occasions, who gave decisions prompt
And, to themselves at least, quite free from doubt
And error. Well do I recall with glee
The quilting-bees, the paring-bees, and the
Sweet "sugarings-off," and other friendly gatherings
That joined in unison both labor and play.

XIV

Long, lonely were the days, and weeks, and months,
When father, marksman keen, shouldered his gun,
And went in quest of larger game, or on
A visit to some distant friends, to view
Also the land and choose, perhaps, another
More advantageous home, or, it might be,
Explored the farther West and braved the wild
Indian and savage beasts in native haunts.
Again, when civil strife rent all the land,
He, at his country's call, served freedom's cause,
And left thee with thy boys and other cares,
To do thy best. In all these trials thou
Wast brave and patient and managed well.

* * * * * *

XV

We passed a decade in those rural scenes;
Then to a city's larger life removed,
Where schools and churches and the better things
That cultivate the mind, refine the heart,
And give a larger scope to youthful aims,
Were to be found. There, thou, the same good wife

And mother fond, mid trials that o'ertook
Us all, through loss of hard-earned gains acquired
In former years, pursuedst thy even course,
By all respected and by many loved.

* * * * * *

XVI

Still later came a year's short residence
In that city by the lake, a mart which now
Grown second in the western world, is destined
Yet to be the mightiest on the globe.

* * * * * *

XVII

Then came another change that parted thee
And me, and sent ye three to dwell in that
Fair clime, the land of flowers, de León's land
Where hides the fabled Fount of Youth, while I
Remained behind. Not often since that parting
Have we met in converse sweet. In thy late years
Calamity has overtaken thee;
For those mild orbs of thine, now sightless quite,
No more can view the scenes all beauteous
That round thee lie, no more can guide thy hand
To write the thoughts that in thy mind do dwell;
And thus the boon of such communion with
Thee now is lost to me, a loss that I
Most deeply feel. Through all this trial thou
Hast been serene and uncomplaining still.

XVIII

For forty years and more thy home has been
Among the fruits and flowers of Florida,
In pretty Crescent City, which crowns a ridge
That parts two lovely lakes—a little gem
Between two other gems. There thou hast had
Thy joys and sorrows, too, losses and gains,
And labor hard, in the earlier days.

XIX

Thy talents and thy goodness there have shone
Conspicuous, in civic work and in

The Church, as well as in thy private life.
There thou hast seen grow up, in worthy ways,
Around thee grandchildren, thy pride, who cheer
And solace thee.

XX

Him that for three score years and six walked by
Thy side, in counsel wise, without reproach,
Esteemed by all and honored for his virtues,
But lately called unto a grander life,
Reward for his high merits in this vale
Of tears, most missed by thee, thou cherishest
In memory's deepest recesses. Him in
His blest abode thou hopest to rejoin
When thy own pilgrimage on earth is done.

XXI

Upon thy younger son, companion to
His parents in those years of good and ill,
Spent in that southern land, upon him, who
In filial love and duty is perfect,
Thou now dost lean, as on a staff, and the
Kind care that he and his bestow on thee
Comforts thee in thy latest days.

XXII

Thus imperfectly, but most lovingly
I've sung thy praises. This slight tribute, all
Unable as it is to do thee justice,
Accept, O Mother dear, from me too weak
In wit for task so great. It is the best
I can.

XXIII

Live happy on, and when the final call
Comes unto thee, go wafted, radiant,
In etherial currents to those blissful realms
Celestial prepared for those that here
On earth have done the Master's will.

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